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Social Media Involvement Among College Students and General Population: Implication to Media Management

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Introduction

- Social network sites (SNS) have developed rapidly in recent decade.
- The increase of controversial issues are on a constant rise, along with the debate on sustainable growth in social network services.



Introduction (Cont'd)

- The application of SNS in TV industry:
Social TV + Transmedia = Intermedia
- In academia, SNS research from interdisciplinary perspectives was conducted.



Introduction (Cont'd)

- Although researchers recognize the various features and apps of SNS, they have not critically examined and analyzed strengths and limitations of SNS as a mass medium.
- Research on SNS use



Introduction (Cont'd)

- The purpose of the present study: we employed a new concept---SNS involvement to measure how the SNS behaviors of college students and general population shed light on how to attract new audiences and keep existing audience against competition for media management



Literature Review

- SNS involvement:
 - Time spent on SNS (heavy & light users)
 - Activities on SNS: frequency of updating (active & passive users)
- SNS Use: rough concept with ambiguous boundaries between time spent on SNS and activities on SNS



Literature Review

- Media characteristics of SNS:
 - Social networks creation;
 - Social networks maintenance;
 - Expandability;
 - Sharing;
 - Identifiability of the users;



Literature Review(Cont'd)

- Limitations of SNS:
 - Privacy divulgation;
 - Information fragmentation;



Literature Review(Cont'd)

- Young people are the largest group of SNS users (Salaway, Caruso, & Nelson, 2008) .
- SNS use varies also by gender, racial, and socioeconomic variables (Cooper & Weaver, 2003; DiMaggio, Hargittai, Celeste, & Shafer, 2004; Hargittai, 2008b; Junco, Merson, & Salter, 2010; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004)



Literature Review(Cont'd)

- Early Internet adopters are more likely to appreciate the various benefits of Internet than late adopters and more likely to displace the traditional media with the Internet (Ha & Fang, 2012).
- Those who used SNS for socialization gratifications and had higher number of friends were more likely to use SNS (Fang & Ha, 2011).
- People with high community participation have a larger social network size offline and may have a higher need to use social media to keep up with their offline network .



Hypotheses

- **H1: The higher the age, the lower the SNS involvement in general population.**
- **H2a: Females are more likely to have higher SNS involvement than males among college students.**
- **H2b: Females are more likely to have higher SNS involvement than males among general population.**



Hypotheses

- **H3a: Minority students are more likely to have higher SNS involvement than Caucasians among college students.**
- **H3b: Minority populations are more likely to have higher SNS involvement than Caucasians among general population.**
- **H4: The higher the education level, the lower the SNS involvement of general population.**



Hypotheses

- **H5a. The more years of experience in SNS, the higher the SNS involvement of college students.**
- **H5b. The more years of experience in SNS, the higher the SNS involvement of general population.**
- **H6a: The higher the number of friends (network size), the higher the SNS involvement of college students.**
- **H6b: The higher the number of friends (network size), the higher the SNS involvement of general population.**



Hypotheses

- **H7a. The higher the community participation, the higher the SNS involvement of general population.**
- **H7b. The higher the community participation, the higher the SNS involvement of the college students.**



Summary of Hypotheses: Predictors of SNS Involvement

- Seven potential predictors of SNS involvement:

Age;

Gender;

Ethnicity;

Education Level;

SNS Use Experience;

SNS Network Size;

Community Participation.



Research Questions

- **R1. Are there differences between high and low SNS involvement in the use of SNS, online activities, and topic preference?**
- **R2. Do these differences exist in both college students and general population?**



Research Method

- Mail and self-administered web survey
- Sep 15 to Nov 25, 2011
- Residents Database in Northwest Ohio (1500) & 32 General education classes for College Students
- Total responses: 215 from residents + 445 from students



Measures

- Socio-demographic Characteristics: age, gender, ethnicity, and education.
- SNS Involvement: 1) How frequently they update their social network page; 2) time spent on SNS
- SNS Activities: 1) Post 2) link; 3) read; 4) follow; 5) play game
- Online activities: 1) post video/pictures; 2) participate in e-mail poll; 3) post product reviews; 4) post comments; 5) participate in contests; 6) add entry to Wiki; 7) Forward or discuss online news content to friend via twitter or Facebook, etc.
- Network size and experience in SNS: friends on SNS; how many years that they have used SNS
- Topic Preference:
- Community Participation: 11-item scale



Results (Regression Model)

Table 2

Regression Analysis Predicting SNS Involvement

	College Students (N=365)	General Population (N=116)
	Beta	Beta
Gender	.070	.147
Age	—	-.112
Ethnicity	-.005	-.050
Education Level	—	-.043
SNS Use Experience	.167**	.306**
SNS Network Size	.153**	-.060
Community Participation	.064	-.149
Adjust R ²	.061	.151

* significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



Results (Bivariate Analysis)

- H1 (Age): was only supported without controlling the other variables ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$) .
- H2a: gender had an effect on SNS involvement at .05 level in one-tailed test ($t = 1.76$, $p = 0.40$) without controlling the other variables.
- H2b: was only supported without controlling the other variables ($t = 3.74$, $p < 0.01$).
- H6b (SNS Network Size): was only supported without controlling the other variables ($r = .33$, $p < 0.01$).



Results

SNS Activities by SNS Involvement

SNS Activities	College Students (N=410)		General Population (N=172)	
	Low	High	Low	High
Post news content from other news media	37.8%	62.2%*	5.3%	94.7%*
Link to other media sites	39.9%	60.1%*	13.6%	86.4%*
Read news posted on the site	46.7%	53.3%	4.2%	95.8%*
Play games	40.0%	60.0%*	5.6%	94.4%*
Follow twitter or Facebook newsfeed for breaking news	39.3%	60.7%*	5.9%	94.1%*

Note: Missing data was



Results

Table 4
Online Activities by SNS Involvement

Online activities (times per month)	College Students (N=410)			General Population (N=172)		
	Mean Scores		t	Mean Scores		t
	Low	High		Low	High	
Post videos made by myself or people I know	.31	.74	-2.317* (N=401)	.00	.28	-2.697** (N=130)
Post video from other sites	1.96	4.08	-2.306* (N=402)	.12	2.26	-1.650 (N=131)
Post pictures taken by myself or people I know	3.05	9.23	-3.544** (N=405)	.51	3.45	-4.069** (N=135)
Post pictures from other sites	1.29	4.32	-1.917*** (N=401)	.10	2.27	-1.665 (N=131)
Participate in e-mail opinion/poll/ratings or questions	.45	1.18	-1.122 (N=400)	.41	.19	.933 (N=131)
Post product reviews	.14	.16	-.181 (N=400)	.09	1.51	-1.080 (N=129)
Post comments/suggestions	5.36	20.22	-2.683** (N=399)	.25	6.94	-3.204** (N=132)
Participate in contests	.22	.35	-.973 (N=399)	1.04	.69	.434 (N=131)
Add entry to collaborative content sites (e.g. Wiki)	.04	.10	-1.028 (N=399)	.00	.03	-1.426 (N=131)
Forward or discuss online news content to friends via twitter or Facebook, etc.	1.52	5.69	-3.099** (N=399)	.12	3.82	-2.135* (N=130)

* significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*** significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Note: Missing data was excluded.



Results

Table 5
Topic Preference by SNS Involvement

	College Students (N=410)		General Population (N=172)	
	Low	High	Low	High
Sports	51.1%	48.9%	61.5%	38.5%
Humor	46.5%	53.5%	55.3%	44.7%
Politics	52.7%	47.3%	61.5%	38.5%
Human Interest	46.4%	53.6%	55.4%	44.6%
Parenting/Education	49.7%	50.3%	48.8%	51.2%
Music and Entertainment	49.1%	50.9%	56.3%	43.7%
Business	53.2%	46.8%	66.2%	33.8%
Celebrity, Lifestyle and Fashion	41.4%	58.6%	38.5%	61.5%
Science/Technology	56.2%	43.8%	61.0%	39.0%
Health and Medicine	52.3%	47.7%	59.2%	40.8%
Local people/happenings	50.0%	50.0%	55.0%	45.0%

Note: Missing data was excluded



Summary of Results: Comparison

- For SNS Involvement Predictors:
 - demographic variables did not predict SNS involvement both among college student & the general population;
 - SNS use experience predict SNS involvement of both college students and general population.
- For SNS Activities:
 - Among both college students and general population people with high SNS involvement

	Significant Differences		No Effect	
	Similarities	Differences	Similarities	Differences
Predictors	SNS use experience	SNS network size (students)	Gender, Ethnicity, Community Participation	SNS network size (general population)
SNS Activities	Other four activities	Read news posted on SNS (general population)	N.A	Read news posted on SNS (students)
Online Activities	Post video/pictures made by myself or people I know; Post comments; Forward/discuss news to friends on SNS	Post video/pictures from other sites (students)	Participate email poll or contests; product review; add entry to Wiki	Post video/pictures from other sites (general population)
Topic Preference	Celebrity (High SNS involvement); Science & business (Low)	Sports & Politics (low SNS involvement in general population)	Humor; human interest; education; health; music; local happenings	Sports & Politics (students)



Discussion

- Similarities:
 - 1) both among college students and general population, people with high SNS involvement were more likely to do more SNS activities;
 - 2) SNS use experience predicted SNS involvement for both college students and general population
- Differences:
 - 1) College students are much more highly involved in SNS than general population and have much larger social network size;
 - 2) The highly involved SNS users in college students are much more active online and in SNS activities than the highly involved SNS users in general population.
 - 3) the highly involved SNS users in the general population are more likely to post product reviews and participate in contests.
 - 4) college students with high SNS involvement posted more videos/pictures made/taken by themselves or people they knew, and posted more videos/pictures from other sites. And people with high SNS involvement among general population posted only more videos/pictures made/taken by themselves or people they knew.



Implications to Media Management

- Media manager should focus on people with high SNS involvement and sending links or contents to them.
- SNS use experience is more important than age to predict SNS involvement.
- Early SNS users should be an important target audience for media marketers.
- demographic characteristics of these early SNS users should be identified for better promotion.
- Media managers should focus on highly involved SNS users of college students
- Media marketers should not ignore either of the two groups: Students who have large SNS network size; People in general population who did not have the advantage of network size.



Implications to Media Management

- TV networks could use the videos/pictures posted by high involvement SNS users to construct their intermedia strategy
- People with high SNS involvement could be powerful potential marketing tool considering their intense participation in SNS activities and online activities.
- The critical/informative media such as TV news networks should target at those with low SNS involvement either directly or through the dissemination of those with high SNS involvement.



Limitation & Future Study

- Limitations: biased sample;
lack of psychological variables
to assess SNS involvement
- Future research